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Double Knowledge?

2020 was a tumultuous, discordant year in so many ways; from conspiracy theories on the pandemic to a sitting US President questioning the validity of election results, we witnessed much public discourse about knowledge. Christian schools, too, are engaged in conversations about knowing related to curriculum, instruction, and policy development. We welcome guest author Dr. Rod Wilson, who shares with us reflections on the important topic of knowledge and knowing.

WHEN I WAS A little boy in church, I remember the shock finding out what ‘know’ really meant. Adam knew Eve (Genesis 4:10) and had a son meant they did that?! As I got older, I began to understand that the Hebrew word for know, *yada*, is not about cognitive knowledge but actually about intimacy, commitment, involvement, shared love, or knowing by experience. Ironically one can be involved sexually and not experience genuine *yada*.

‘To know’ is not straightforward; there is ambiguity and mystery in it. So, when educators are asking—what do we want our students to know?—

we are in an endeavour that has complexity and requires wisdom.

Is the right knowledge ensured by having devotionals before every meeting? By increasing the number of Bible classes in our curriculum? By frequent prayer meetings? By a disciplinary policy that enforces particular Christian behaviour? Does the phrase ‘teaching for transformation’ capture all that we want to say about knowing? When we draw distinctions between discipleship and education or piety and scholarship, what kind of knowledge are we referencing?

When schools in a provincial jurisdiction are required to follow particular ministry guidelines,

what does the adjective Christian mean in front of the noun school? Is there knowing that is distinctly Christian and not in step with government directives or does Christian knowing encompass all that is human and not necessarily only that which is 'spiritual'?

While some might argue that Calvin's Institutes have no relevance to SCSBC education in 2021, I would propose that his articulation of *double knowledge* is a good place to start in any discussion on knowing as it applies to Christian education.

Central to Calvin's understanding of *double knowledge* are the following:

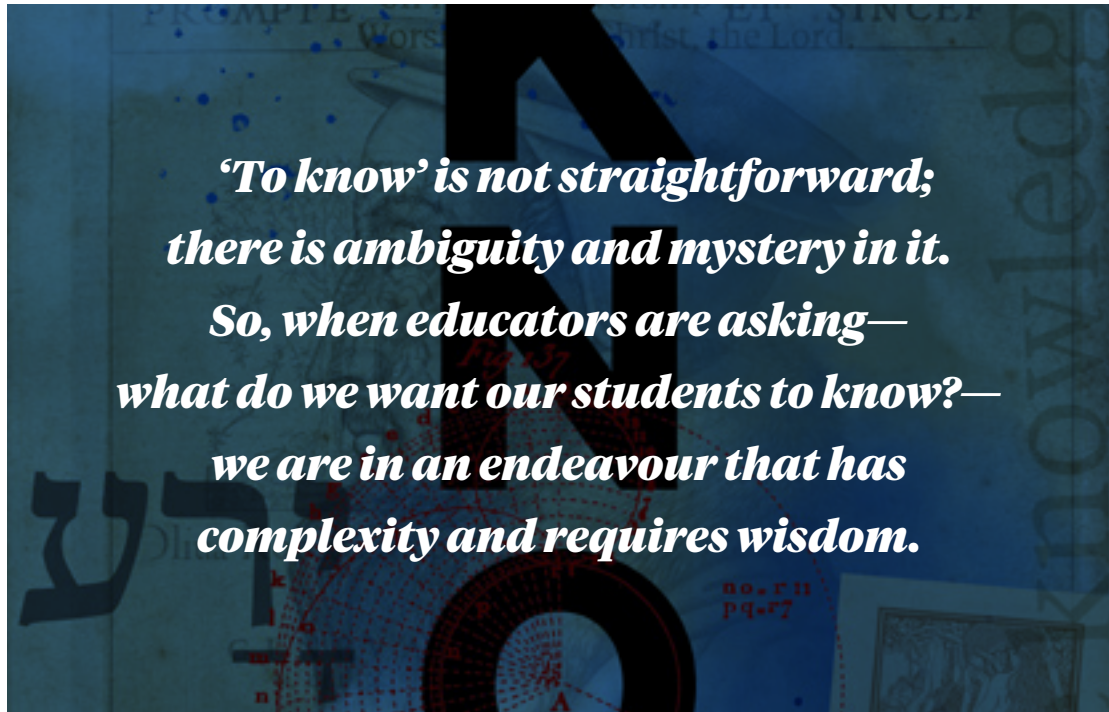
- All wisdom is comprised of two parts—knowledge of God and knowledge of self.
- If something is good or true, its roots can be traced to these two types of knowledge.
- While intimately connected, it is not always clear which knowledge precedes and produces the other.

- The perfections of God may well lead us to an understanding of our own imperfections, while our imperfections may move us toward God.
- Knowledge of ourselves incites us to seek after God and understand who He is.
- Knowing God is helped immeasurably by an understanding of ourselves.

Even though the Institutes were written over four centuries ago, double knowledge is particularly relevant in some of our current Christian sub-culture tensions where there is a fragmentation between knowing God and knowing self.

Some would have us believe that the negation of self is a prerequisite for following God. The second verse of the chorus, *We Have Come Into His House*, captures this well:

*So forget about yourself and concentrate
on Him and worship Him*



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*So forget about yourself and concentrate
on Him and worship Him*

Worship Him, Christ, the Lord.

Not sure what it means to forget about yourself, as in reality, that is all I have! When I come to worship, who I am, what is going on with me, what I am experiencing, all combine together in my understanding of God. Knowing myself in my full humanity and knowing God in his fullness, come together so I can worship.

There are Christian schools where a lack of double knowledge shows up in this form. Knowing God takes the primary place and there is little integration with the human experience and the self. Bible is more spiritual than sports. Behaviour has more value than belonging. The self is threatening and needs to be submerged under a particular theological understanding. Students learn that 'who they are' takes a back seat to 'who God is,' and that true humility is being down on yourself.

Another expression of this kind of fragmentation is found in the elevation of the social sciences to a place where theology—faith seeking understanding—is muted and the self becomes a preoccupation. There is no question that disciplines like psychology, sociology, and the like, have greatly aided our understanding of the human condition and the self in particular. In many cases, these disciplines have stumbled on true truth even though it did not come about through careful biblical understanding.

The risk is that, with the elevation of disciplines that help us understand the self, God who created humanity can be removed from the equation. There are Christian schools where a lack of double knowledge shows up in this form. Developing a sense of self can ignore the need to frame this important emphasis within the context of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Self-discipline, self-awareness, self-respect, self-understanding, and sexual identity all have their appropriate place in the educational enterprise, but a knowledge of God

needs to part of the fabric so the weaving actually reflects double knowledge and not simply a single strand knowledge of self.

What would happen if:

- Parents put their legitimate concerns with adherence to particular beliefs and compliance to specific behaviours in perspective and asked—is my child experiencing deeper understanding of what it means to know themselves and God, both at home and at school?
- Teachers put their legitimate allegiance to a particular academic discipline in perspective and asked—is my teaching and the embodiment of that teaching enhancing double knowledge of my students?
- Superintendents, principals, and vice-principals put their legitimate responsibilities around hiring, supervision, evaluation, and administrative systems in perspective and asked—is this school bathed in, and expressive of, knowledge of God and knowledge of self.
- Boards put their legitimate mandate around governance, mission oversight, and fiduciary stewardship in perspective and asked—is this Board leading with a fundamental concern around double knowledge?

If these questions were grappled with wisely, more students would graduate from our schools not just with content mastery, personal piety, and skill development, but with an embryonic sense that the best way to live their life is to cultivate double knowledge. 🌸

ROD WILSON

Rod Wilson served as President of Regent College from 2000–2015. Originally trained as a clinical psychologist, Dr. Wilson has been involved in the field of counselling and consulting for over 30 years. He is currently Teaching Pastor at Capilano Christian Community, as well as Senior Advisor with A Rocha Canada, and consultant with various organizations, including SCSBC.



When Families Leave

*Some families will make the decision to leave prior to graduation
and it is incumbent upon you as a school to understand why.
How can your school **move toward healthy change?***

AS SCHOOL LEADERS, YOUR passion for educating, nurturing, and guiding the next generation of disciples is what defines your day-to-day work. When a family leaves your school, it impacts you and the school. Beyond lost tuition revenue, the greater reality is that you lose the opportunity to serve that child, that family, to have your mission impact them, and to see your school's vision bear fruit in their lives.

Nevertheless, some families *will* make the decision to leave prior to graduation and it is incumbent on you to understand why. Families will leave your school for many different reasons and the decision

not to re-enroll is doubtful to be one that parents make lightly. Changing schools is a significant transition not only for the child(ren) but for the whole family. Beyond moving out of the area, the most common reason families give for leaving a school is affordability; they cannot afford the tuition. However, finances are often not the primary reason they are leaving. The issue of affordability is often used to avoid conflict or further discussion. The reasons for leaving often stem from disappointment or a lack of satisfaction with one or more aspects of the school that ultimately brings into question the value of the family's investment in the school.

For a family who is wavering in their decision to

stay at the school, an open, candid conversation may help them make the decision to stay at the school. However, once a family gives formal notice, it is vital to capture their school experiences and document their reasons for leaving. When a family chooses to leave *your* school, do you know the true motivations behind their decision?

This is where the exit interview survey comes in. It honours your departing families by giving them the opportunity to speak into their experiences and is a valuable resource that can serve as an assessment tool for growth, stimulating healthy change. It provides critical information on satisfaction levels, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and potentially critical issues. It will help you identify the deciding factors that move families to look elsewhere for their children's education and the criteria they have for choosing their new school. Ultimately, it will assist you to capitalize on strengths, improve on weaknesses, and develop plans for healthy change by providing you with solid data gathered in a consistent manner. School leaders need to understand, evaluate, and address the themes that emerge from the exit interview in order to be proactive, not reactive, in retaining families for the long term.

The exit interview is also a key piece in marketing your school. If families leave on a negative note it can lead to damaging conversations in the community in which you are actively promoting your school. Conversely, providing the opportunity to share their school experience can build bridges, fostering positive relationships. As a result, the families are more likely to speak well of your school to others – even if the school may not have been a good fit for their children.

The exit interview can also provide validation that you are delivering what you promised when families first enrolled, that you are fulfilling your mission. It can furnish you with some wonderful stories to share with your community, stories that

may kindle a deeper appreciation for the education your school is providing their children and ultimately strengthen their commitment to Christian education.

In summary, in order to understand the reasons for attrition and how you can improve your school to keep your current families enrolled, the completion of an exit survey needs to be a part of the withdrawal process. Just as we take great care with our admissions process to ensure families are dealt with fairly and honourably, we also need to provide care when a family decides to leave the school.

In light of this, and recognizing that many schools are not capturing important information from families who leave, SCSBC struck a task force to build an exit

protocol for our member schools. This includes a withdrawal process that can be adapted to any size school and an exit interview survey that can be modified for use on many platforms. Many thanks to Chris Berghuis (Pacific Christian School), Clara Atagi (Surrey Christian School), Cyndy Loewen (Kelowna Christian School), and Savaya Hofsink (Vernon Christian School) for their insights into designing both the withdrawal process, flow chart, and exit survey template. Our next step is to conduct a test drive before rolling out the protocol to our schools. We look forward to sharing it with you in 2021. 🌸

CATHY KITS

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SCSBC Director of Development

Beautiful Work

How do we encourage beautiful work from our students? What is beautiful work? Christian Deeper Learning is the invitation for students to discover their gifts, develop skills, and move toward restoration.

STUDENTS ARE FORMED by the work they do and the routines they follow. As students engage in thirteen years of beautiful work—work known by the qualities of complexity, craftsmanship, authenticity, and purpose, work that relies on a team for successful completion, work that improves not just the learners life, but the lives of others as well, participants experience glimpses of what it means to live as beautiful workers. They are becoming beautiful workers who live inspiring lives that honour their role as co-authors in God’s story.

Deeper Learning in Christian schools invites students into work on a meaningful task. In the younger years, a good teacher has the privilege and significant responsibility of ‘hero status’ in the eyes of the learner. As students age, some of this ‘hero status’ wears off. As teachers face the reality that their status as celebrities will not be enough to entice students to work, they have a choice. Teachers

can use management tactics like penalties, grades, percentages, threats, and candy to cajole students to complete the work that the teacher wants. This can work for a time. Though fear motivates students toward task completion, learning in a state of fear is unproductive in the long term and disrespectful of an individual’s identity as an image bearer.

Christian Deeper Learning imagines the pursuit of a different learning story. It is a story that is more challenging yet challenging in a life-giving way. Often the best, most fulfilling work is also the most demanding. From the beginning God gives humanity, both collectively and individually, a role to play. When learners engage with a meaningful task, schoolwork turns from being about competition and a dumpster project into work that has impact. As schools support learners in active participation in the role God gives them, they are invited into a demanding rigorous learning experience that also deepens their relationship with God and with others.



One of the many compelling competing stories of our age is that work is a means to an end—a means to graduation, a means to retirement, so that then the good times can begin. This is a story that has been institutionalized in the education sector. Many traditional educational practices invite students to prioritize self and find their identity in individual achievement. Rather than inviting learners into playing a role in God's story and world, many educational practices teach students to be gods of their own curated reality.

Christian Deeper Learning invites students outside of their curated individualism into work that is oriented outside of self. Rooted in an identity of God's image bearer, learners are invited to engage in tasks that help them further develop their own identity through interaction with and service of others. Christian Deeper Learning is an invitation to restoration. Through practices which promote identity development, mastery of content and skills, creativity and imagination, and learning in the support of others, students are invited into God's story at both a personal and institutional level.

Practices which promote the mastery of content and skills are essential if learners are engaged in restoration. However, if our practices which promote complexity, craftsmanship, authenticity and purpose while encouraging students to compete with the rest of the learners in class, the competing story of individualism will overshadow our focus on restoration. As schools assist students in focusing on collective and individual growth over individual achievement, we foster practices which minimize self-promotion and maximize our collective responsibility to communal flourishing. As we emphasize competency development over straight content acquisition, a

student's social responsibility work and reflection can be focused on the skills they need to increase their ability to support others in their learning.

Practices which promote identity development are foundational to restoration. A learner can only share what talents God has entrusted to them if they have done the work of exploration and discovery of both God and self. Just as teachers teach out of who they are, learners can only work toward restoration with humility and openness if they have also looked inside themselves to explore their strengths and

weakness and how God might be using weakness and struggle to develop deeper reliance on Him and deeper empathy for the marginalized. By supporting students to see their struggles as another person's opportunity to shine and serve, small groups, morning meetings, peer tutoring, and CREW can foster interdependence, giving students a glimpse of a deeper sense of God's design for human flourishing.

In a rapidly changing world, emphasis on the competency of thinking is paramount. Creative, critical, and reflective thinking are pillars to lifelong learning, survival as adults, and flourishing as Christians. As image bearers of a creative God, cre-

ativity and imagination, two areas of development that God showcases again and again in creation, are key elements of Christian Deeper Learning. As school leaders work with their staff in developing a place-based approach to Christian Deeper Learning, leaders should see an invitation into the role of prophet, painting a vision for learning in a new way. Walter Brueggemann suggests that, "The prophet engages in futuring fantasy. The prophet does not ask if the vision can be implemented, for questions of implementation are of no consequence until the vision can be imagined. The imagination

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must come before the implementation. Our culture is competent to implement almost anything and to imagine almost nothing.” As prophets, school leaders should consistently share frameworks, practices and stories of a renewed learning vision. A renewed vision that places our pandemic reality as a launch point for future improvements in our ability to support students in understanding that God’s way is a way of interdependence not individualism and self-reliance.

Stephen Covey challenged people to begin with the end in mind; Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe made this concept practical for educators with a three-stage model of Understanding by Design (UBD). Many teachers engage with UBD at the unit planning level. Christian Deeper Learning invites educators and educational leaders to use the elements of UBD to start planning by first envisioning the worthwhile task that is represented in the *Big Idea* they are professionally obligated to engage with in the provincial curriculum. When a summative task gives students purpose and direction that extends beyond personal development (i.e. sharing some-

one else’s story, advocating for the marginalized, creating inclusive processes and policies, planning hospitality events, designing an app for a local park, adopting a local not-for-profit, naturalizing the school property, challenging city policy that does not align with creation care) students are engaged in Beautiful Work. 🌸

DARREN SPYKSMA

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1. A phrase passed on to me by Brian Doornenbol: an assignment, that when complete, is recycled, as it has no perceived lasting value.
2. Jal Mehta & Sarah Fine, *In Search of Deeper Learning: The Quest to Remake the American High School*
3. Edvance Christian Schools Association, “Three Dimensions of Learning”
4. Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*
5. eleducation.org/resources/purposes-of-crew
6. Walter Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*
7. Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*
8. Grant Wiggins & Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*

News & Events

SCSBC

Business & Development Conference

*Re-Imagined for 2021**

Join us on April 12, 2021

8:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. (virtual)



featuring Carson Pue

"This Changes Everything"

lessons learned from 2020

(with an additional workshop for
development and business after Carson's plenary)



Carson Pue is recognized as a leader of leaders. He is known globally through his mentoring of Christian leaders and is the best-selling author of *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Calling, Character, and Competency* and three other titles. Known for his masterful storytelling and innovative mentoring style, Carson equips leaders with remarkable wisdom and spiritual insights behind what it takes to be a leader today.

More info to come!

*note: the postponed 2020 conference entitled "Nurturing Trust" will take place in April 2022 where we hope to meet in person using our usual conference format.



wisdom4topia

WISDOM 4 THE WAY

*Relational and
Emotional Flourishing*

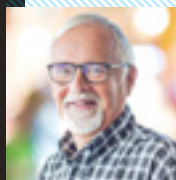
Videos series featuring
Dr. Rod Wilson

This video series focuses on the well-being of all those who participate in the Christian school movement, whether they receive remuneration or function as a volunteer.

Each video is 5-7 minutes in length and will be available on the 1st and 4th Tuesday of every month from September through June.

The topics will have both an individual and communal orientation, with an underlying emphasis on lived experience.

Contact the SCSBC office
for more information:
contact@scsbc.ca



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COVID-19 and International Students

WE HAVE ALL BEEN stretched and challenged lately. Not only with Covid-19 but with all the adjustments we have had to make for all students to continue to receive a quality education.

As we begin 2021, we need to evaluate how well we are supporting our international students and explore what we can do better.

Our international students and their families have had to adjust and make difficult decisions whether they would continue their studies in Canada. Some have made the difficult decision to return home while others remained. Those who remain are not only dealing with the challenges of studying and living in Canada but are dealing with the stress of not being able to see their families and the uncertainty of when they can go home. Our experienced and competent International Student Program staff are doing an excellent job of supporting our students; however, this job has its stresses, and it is incumbent upon us to be very intentional about acknowledging their unique struggles.

This is not only a good time to reassess our policies regarding enrolment and homestay but also ensure that these policies align with the mission and vision of your school. One of the key areas that

is worth exploring is: how your school's Homestay program guideline aligns with your vision and mission. Are you ensuring that host families are supportive of the school and are providing a nurturing and caring environment? Our students are at a vulnerable time in their lives and it is important they receive the care and nurture needed to thrive.

Are we also recognizing the diversity of cultures represented within our school body? Are we being sensitive to the cultural differences? As school leaders it is important that teachers and staff are encouraged to be mindful of the diversity of perspectives that may be in their classrooms and that they find creative ways for students to share their thoughts and experiences.

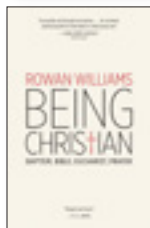
As we continue into 2021 let us move ahead knowing that God is in control, that He knows the outcome of the events happening in our world and that ultimately His perfect redemptive plan for His people is being accomplished. My prayer is that every aspect of our programs will reflect that we are serving a God who has all things in His control. 🌸

MARLENE BYLENGA

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Interim International Student Program Coordinator

Recommended Resources



WORLDVIEW BOOK/PODCAST CLUB

Teachers representing four schools within SCSBC membership are engaged in an eight-month professional learning experience focused on developing a deeper understanding of biblical worldview and how worldviews shape decision making in life and in the classroom. Our learning targets for this professional development experience are:

1. We can deepen our understanding and application of God's Story in our personal and professional lives.
2. We can develop a deeper sense and appreciation of the Christian educator network in BC.

Participants meet once a month to discuss a book or podcast that explores an element of worldview thinking and how Christian's use scripture to support their journey of faith. Sessions aim to close with a commitment to action in one area that arose through the reading, listening, and discussion. If you are interested in launching a worldview book/podcast club at your school, reach out to Darren Spyksma (darren.spyksma@scsbc.ca) for details about the resource selection, process, context, and a facilitator's guide that includes targets, proposed schedule, and guiding questions for the discussions.

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